

from the pen of
LYNN FLETCHER HOWARD

«DATA #1040101»
«Mxx» «First Name» «Last Name»
«Company»
«Address»
«City», «St» «Zip»

Dear «First Name»:

Who am I and why am I writing you? Well, I'm Lynn Fletcher Howard and I am adopting you! That's right, you are going to become a member of my family and as such I am going to be writing you often. They will be letters you will look forward to getting because, I promise, they will brighten your day with news of the other members of our family whom I will introduce to you a few at a time.

We will have lots to share, you and I, in these letters. We will go on memory trips to other times in your life ... happy times when you looked forward to what came next. We will explore areas that make you feel happy and content and, yes, we will have some laughs, too.

«First Name», now sit back and get ready to meet the first member of your new family ... Nan Johnson. Nan is getting up there in age in fact she will be celebrating her 97th birthday in this coming June. Up until two years ago she was living with my husband and me having moved in with us the week following her 90th birthday. We had her company and wisdom for almost 5 years. However, health problems we weren't equipped to handle required that she be moved into a skilled nursing facility.

It took Nan several months to get used to her new situation. You can probably understand a change at that age can be very difficult but she is now content with her surroundings and participates in activities. Nan is a whiz at bingo almost always winning a stuffed animal or two. Would you

believe most of the special occasion gifts she gives family members she wins playing bingo!

«First Name», in her younger years Nan was quite a gal. She and my father Will made it through the Great Depression like everyone else ... by the skin of their teeth. They managed to raise their 3 little boys during that time plus bring a daughter into the world... that was me. During the Depression they even built a home for the family with their own hands. It was a little house but a home all the same.

Paul Howard, my husband, is the patriarch of our clan. No he's not an oil tycoon like JR on "Dallas" nor is he a Jed Clampet of the "Beverly Hillbillies." He's somewhere in between. Just kind of a regular guy that cares for his family but gives them room to breathe and grow. Maybe Paul will remind you of someone you know or once knew.

Paul was raised in the Mid-West just outside Chicago. He was a Depression baby ... a lot of us were. Although times were tough his family enjoyed simple things like getting together with the relatives on the week-end. He particularly enjoyed visiting his grandparents in Elmhurst, Illinois which at that time was a pretty rural area with small farms or large gardens, whatever you considered them.

His grandma, the mother of 4 boys, ruled the house with an iron will. Only 5' tall she still was a source to be reckoned with even though all the boys in the family were well over 6' tall. She may have been little but she was mighty. It comes from surviving hard times and doing hard work.

Thought for the day ... If ever someone tells you that you're getting old, very emphatically tell them, "I'm not getting old, I'm just coming of age!"

Till next time ... *Lynn*